

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency HQ: Recovery Act News Releases Update body {
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WASHINGTON - The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Service's (HHS) Indian Health Service (IHS) today announced \$90 million in funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 for improved access to vital drinking water and wastewater services in the American Indian and Alaska Native communities. The funds will be invested in 'shovel ready' infrastructure projects designed to better protect human and environmental health in Indian Country and to create jobs.

"This investment is win-win. Addressing long-standing water issues in tribal communities is also going to bring in new jobs and new opportunities – helping them get through the economic downturn and build a lasting foundation for prosperity," said EPA Administrator Lisa P. Jackson.

"EPA is committed to working with our tribal partners on solutions that benefit our environment, our health, and our economy."

"This generous recovery act funding will make communities in Indian Country safer, healthier and stronger," HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius said. "Everyone should have safe drinking water and sanitation facilities and we're committed to improving the quality of life in Indian

Country.”

Continuing a tradition spanning 20 years, EPA and IHS’s combined effort to improve water services in Indian Country contributed to their identification of 95 wastewater and 64 drinking water priority projects to be completed by IHS’s Sanitation Facilities Construction Program through EPA recovery act funds. The projects exceed the recovery act requirement that 20 percent of the funds be used for green infrastructure, water and energy efficiency improvements and other environmentally innovative projects.

According to 2007 data from the IHS, approximately 10 percent of tribal homes do not have safe drinking water and/or wastewater disposal facilities compared with 0.6 percent of non-native homes in the United States that lack such infrastructure as measured in 2005 by the U.S. Census. The water and wastewater infrastructure programs are a significant effort to improve tribal access to safe and adequate drinking and wastewater facilities. For example, a project to benefit the Tule River Tribe in Porterville, Calif., will replace failing septic systems, which threaten public health and the environment, with a community wastewater system. The White Mountain Apache Tribe in Whiteriver, Ariz., will benefit from an efficient surface water treatment facility, which will provide the quality of drinking water needed to protect the health of residents in over 2,000 homes.

President Obama signed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 on Feb. 17, 2009, and has directed that the recovery act be implemented with unprecedented transparency and accountability. To that end, the American people can see how every dollar is being invested at recovery.gov.

More information about all the EPA recovery act water efforts: <http://www.epa.gov/water/eparecovery/>